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Standing Committee on National Defence

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Wednesday, October 14, 2020

Chair: Mrs. Karen McCrimmon



Standing Committee on National Defence

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• (1535)

[*English*]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Michael MacPherson): Honourable members of the committee, I see a quorum.

I must inform members that the clerk of the committee can only receive motions for the election of the chair. The clerk cannot receive other types of motions, entertain points of order, or participate in debate.

We can now proceed to the election of the chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the chair must be a member of the government party.

I am ready to receive motions for the chair.

Mr. Spengemann.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Clerk, it is my pleasure to nominate Mrs. Karen McCrimmon as a candidate for chair of this committee.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Spengemann that Mrs. McCrimmon be elected as chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Pursuant to the order of Wednesday, September 23, I will now proceed to a recorded division. The question is that, as moved by Mr. Spengemann, Karen McCrimmon be elected chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 12; nays 0)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mrs. Karen McCrimmon duly elected chair of the committee.

I invite Mrs. McCrimmon to take the chair.

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.)): Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Dear colleagues, thank you very much for the trust you have placed in me. I am very honoured to serve as chair of this committee. I look forward to starting the work we will be doing together.

Welcome, everyone.

[*English*]

The Clerk: If the committee is in agreement, we can now proceed to the election of the vice-chairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the first vice-chair must be a member of the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the first vice-chair.

• (1540)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): I move that the first vice-chair be James Bezan.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mrs. Gallant that Mr. Bezan be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

Seeing none, I will now move to the recorded division pursuant to the House order of Wednesday, September 23. The question is that Mr. Bezan be elected as first vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 12; nays 0)

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Bezan duly elected first vice-chair of the committee.

We can now proceed to the election of the second vice-chair. Pursuant to Standing Order 106(2), the second vice-chair must be a member of an opposition party other than the official opposition.

I am now prepared to receive motions for the second vice-chair.

Mr. Baker.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

I nominate Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe for second vice-chair.

The Clerk: It has been moved by Mr. Baker that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

Are there any further motions?

[*English*]

Pursuant to the House order of Wednesday, September 23, 2020, I will now proceed to a recorded division.

The motion is that Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe be elected as second vice-chair of the committee.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 12; nays 0)

[Translation]

The Clerk: I declare the motion carried and Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe duly elected second vice-chair of the committee.

[English]

I turn it over to you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much for that.

It's so good to see you all here today. We have so much good work to do. I'm really excited to get moving and go forward. I want to thank you for making the first part of this meeting so easy and straightforward.

Now we can move on to looking at the routine motions. There are a couple of different ways of doing this. I think we will go through the routine motions one by one. Someone will read it out—I hope I have a volunteer for that—and then there will be an opportunity for anyone to give input or debate.

Please use the “raise hand” function. I think the “raise hand” function is good in that it actually logs who put their hand up first. This makes it much easier for me to keep track of who's waiting to speak on a particular issue. Once you've spoken, lower your hand again so that I know that everyone who wanted a chance to speak on that particular issue has had a chance. My job is to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and be heard. That's exactly what I'm going to be working on.

If, along the way, we come up with a slightly different way that is more fair or transparent, I am more than willing to consider it. This is just a way for us to get started. Later on, when it comes to voting on motions, etc., we'll have more discussions.

To start, then, when we want to have a debate or talk about a motion, use the “raise hand” function. When it's time for a vote on a motion, we could either do it quickly with the visual reference of raising your hand, or we could do a recorded division, if that is requested.

Let's start with the routine motions. Who is going to start the routine motions?

Yvan, go ahead.

• (1545)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Chair.

You'll see that I raised my hand in the “raise hand” feature. I'm trying to lead us off appropriately, as per the direction of the chair.

I will move the routine motions. These are the same motions we had in place previously. I'll move them one at a time, unless you direct me otherwise.

The first motion—I'm reading from the document that was circulated by the clerk—is under “Analyst Services”. It reads:

That the committee retain, as needed and at the discretion of the chair, the services of one or more analysts from the Library of Parliament to assist it in its work.

The Chair: Is there any debate or any input? I see none.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: That works all right. Thank you very much.

We will go to the next routine motion.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It states:

That the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure be established and be composed of five members, namely the Chair and one member from each recognized party; and that the subcommittee work in a spirit of collaboration.

The Chair: Do we have anybody who would like to debate or give input on this particular motion?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): You lost me at collaboration.

The Chair: I don't see anybody else wanting to speak on this motion. I'm trying to read these little lists of people to make sure that I have given everybody who wanted to speak an opportunity to speak.

I don't see any people who want to discuss this motion any further.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Motion number three is next.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's about meeting without a quorum:

That the chair be authorized to hold meetings to receive and publish evidence when a quorum is not present, provided that at least four (4) members are present, including a member of the opposition and one member of the government, but when travelling outside the parliamentary precinct, that the meeting begin after fifteen (15) minutes, regardless of members present.

The Chair: Would anybody like to speak?

Yes, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I would like to amend that motion so it reads “including two members of the opposition and two members of the government”.

The Chair: There's an amendment on the floor.

Does anybody have any further debate or discussion?

Seeing none, let's vote on this amendment—

• (1550)

Mr. Yvan Baker: Madam Chair, I think Mrs. Gallant had....

The Chair: Mrs. Gallant, go ahead.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Can you clarify whether that is two members of any opposition, or does one have to include the official opposition? I'm just seeking clarification there.

Mr. James Bezan: It is my understanding that it would just be two members of the opposition, regardless of party affiliation.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: Is there any further debate on this amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

The Chair: We will go back to the main motion. The entirety of the amendment is “including two members of the opposition and two members of the government”.

Are all in favour of the motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will move on to number four.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The motion states:

That the witnesses be given ten (10) minutes for their opening statement; That, at the discretion of the chair, during the questioning of witnesses, there be allocated six (6) minutes for the first questioner of each party as follows: Round 1: Conservative Party, Liberal Party, Bloc Québécois, New Democratic Party. For the second and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party: 5 minutes, Liberal Party: 5 minutes, Conservative Party: 5 minutes, Liberal Party: 5 minutes, Bloc Québécois: 2.5 minutes, New Democratic Party: 2.5 minutes.

The Chair: We have the motion. Does anybody want to debate it or make an intervention at this time?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I have a question.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Are these particular sets of rules that we're agreeing upon now applicable just while Parliament is in this state of virtual reality? When we return to full in-person meetings, will these remain the same?

The Chair: Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: These routine motions would be in effect for the entire session. When the pandemic is over, the committee could always revisit any routine motions and adjust them whenever they see fit.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Is there further discussion on this motion?

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Chair, I've had the "raise hand" function on.

The Chair: Okay, thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'd like to propose an amendment to this routine motion.

I'd like to move that the routine motion be amended to replace the text regarding the second round of questioning with the following: "For the second round and subsequent rounds, the order and time for questioning be as follows: Conservative Party: 5 minutes, Liberal Party: 5 minutes, Bloc Québécois: 2.5 minutes, New Democratic Party: 2.5 minutes, Conservative Party: 5 minutes, Liberal Party: 5 minutes."

The Chair: I register that amendment.

Are there any discussion points on the amendment?

Mr. Randall Garrison: Madam Chair, again, I have the raised hand, but that's not working too well, so I won't do it that way.

I did ask that the clerk circulate this in advance, so I hope people can see the text. I'm not sure that happened.

What this does is make sure that we have diverse voices in each of the rounds as we go through. The way things tend to work is that the Bloc tends to get dropped out of the second round completely by the timing. That's my reason for proposing this motion.

The Chair: All right. Is there any other debate?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We'll move on to number five.

● (1555)

Mr. Yvan Baker: The motion states:

That only the clerk of the committee be authorized to distribute documents to members of the committee and only when such documents exist in both official languages, and that witnesses be advised accordingly.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is motion six.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This motion is about working meals:

That the clerk of the committee be authorized to make the necessary arrangements to provide working meals for the committee and its subcommittees.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

Mr. James Bezan: I'd like to move an amendment.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Because we are working mainly virtually and there will be some members who may or may not be in attendance physically when they're in Ottawa, I would like to add at the end of that motion "provided that members have confirmed their physical presence for the meeting", so that we're not ordering extra food.

The Chair: Is there any further discussion on the proposed amendment?

(Amendment agreed to)

(Motion as amended agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We move on to number seven.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Chair.

This motion is under the heading "Travel, Accommodation and Living Expenses of Witnesses". It states:

That, if requested, reasonable travel, accommodation and living expenses be reimbursed to witnesses not exceeding two representatives per organization; and that, in exceptional circumstances, payment for more representatives be made at the discretion of the Chair.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is motion number eight.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This motion is under "Access to In Camera Meetings". It reads:

That, unless otherwise ordered, each committee member be allowed to be accompanied by one staff person at in camera meetings and that each party be allowed one additional staff person at such meetings.

The Chair: Does anyone want to debate this motion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and congratulations.

I don't know where to put my comment, because Zoom meetings are new to us.

Would it be possible for our assistants to have access to the Zoom meeting as well? I am the only one having to switch to the French channel so that my colleagues can hear me properly. Sometimes, with the interpretation and the English, it's a bit harder for a French speaker. My assistant certainly speaks better English than I do.

I am asking the clerk and the chair: since our assistants cannot keep track of everything that is going on over the phone, could they be given access to the Zoom meeting?

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much for that intervention.

Mr. Clerk, do you have some further information? I know it was a technology limitation. Do we think we might see our way to making it more available to staff members?

The Clerk: At present, no. The policy is that staff members are allowed to use "listen live" telephone lines, or they can watch on ParlVU, which has about a 70-second delay.

However, if we have an in camera meeting, each MP is allowed to have a staff member in the Zoom meeting. They wouldn't have to be situated next to you; they could be elsewhere in the country. We would give them the link and the password, and they would sign in. We just wouldn't activate their camera, and we wouldn't have their microphone on. They wouldn't be "at the table", per se, but they would be "in the room".

• (1600)

The Chair: We have Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, and then Mr. Bezan.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I move an amendment to the motion to allow staff members to attend via videoconference at all times.

[*English*]

The Chair: Is that a formal amendment to the motion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I can send it to you. Yes, it is formal.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bezan, go ahead.

Mr. James Bezan: I don't have a great deal of difficulty with what has been proposed by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe. I think that if we're going to have our staff come into in camera meetings, which we may have to move into relatively quickly, then we have to go

through the whole process of having them come into Zoom after they've been watching on ParlVU or listening in by calling into the committee meeting live.

From the standpoint of moving people efficiently between in camera meetings and those not in camera, it would be good. I would just request, if that's the case, that they not be allowed to have microphone or even video privileges; they would strictly be there to watch the proceedings, as they would if we were in the House or in committee physically.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Bagnell, go ahead.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): I understand the amendment is to allow staff to be available for all meetings. I wonder if the clerk could elaborate a bit more on why the policy is in place the way it is. Was it a decision of PROC, or is it a technical thing?

The Clerk: I believe it's more in line with a technical issue. House administration has made some policy decisions in this regard. I would just ask members to bear in mind that the transition to Zoom has been thrust upon the House, so a lot of these questions are being answered on the fly. The way committees proceeded throughout the summer, no members' assistants could participate in the Zoom meetings unless they were not in camera, and that only came partway through the summer.

I would need to do a bit more research on our technical capabilities and come back to the committee with an answer. I would not feel comfortable at this time saying, "Sure, that's fine."

One thing I would like to clarify, though, with regard to a committee moving from a public sitting to an in camera meeting, is that it's not something we can do on the fly anymore. If the committee wishes to go in camera, we will have to suspend. We will have to actually create an entirely new Zoom meeting. It would be a completely different Zoom meeting. Members would be issued a new link, a new password, and then we would have to return in that fashion. Even if we want to switch over to in camera at lightspeed, we're looking at a 15-minute window, and that's moving really, really quickly. If we know in advance that part of a meeting is going to be in camera, we can trim that down a little bit, but even then 15 minutes is pretty much breakneck speed for switching from public to in camera.

The Chair: Okay.

I have four hands up. Do you all still want to talk?

Mr. Bagnell, do you want to speak again, or was your question answered?

• (1605)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Chair, my question was answered. It might be appropriate, then, to defer this to the next meeting while the clerk does his research on the technical stuff.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

With all due respect to the clerk, it's hard for me to understand how there could be a technical limitation that wouldn't apply to the in camera meetings. I think what we need to do, in the spirit of Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe's motion, is to say "under the same limitations as in in camera meetings". If it works in in camera meetings to have one for each one, then it should work in our general meetings to have one staff member for each person and one for the whip's office, and there is no technical difference between those two.

I'm not sure whether you need a formal amendment, but all staff should be offered access under the same limitations as in an in camera meeting.

The Chair: There is Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, one more time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Mr. Garrison just used an argument that I was going to use. I understand what the clerk said. It was thrust upon us and I am not blaming anyone. I made this motion in an effort to improve the situation and the spirit of debate.

Like my colleague Mr. Bagnell, I will look forward to hearing about it. We may get some technical clarifications at the next meeting and we will see. I believe everyone stands to gain if we change the way we do this.

[*English*]

The Clerk: I would also insert that these are not just technical limitations. These are also the parameters that were agreed to by the whips of the various parties when they negotiated how these meetings would take place, and there is the House administration's ability to support the meetings.

I will get back to you at the next meeting with a concrete answer one way or another.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, would you like a vote on your motion, or would you like to withdraw it and defer it to the next meeting, when we get a report back from the clerk?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: We have a consensus. Let us wait for clarifications at the next meeting. We will talk about it again once we have the technical details.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Okay, so routine motion number eight is unamended, then. Is there any further discussion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will get an answer about the motion as time goes on. We're all just learning this. I am, as well. We'll need to have a bit of flexibility, and I appreciate your willingness to help here to keep this moving forward.

Okay, we have motion nine.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Chair.

This motion is under "Transcripts of In Camera Meetings":

That one copy of the transcript of each in camera meeting be kept in the committee clerk's office for consultation by members of the committee.

The Chair: Is there any debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Next is motion 10.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This is under "Notice of Motion":

That forty-eight (48) hours' notice, interpreted as two nights, shall be required for any substantive motion to be considered by the committee, unless the substantive motion relates directly to business then under consideration, provided that one notice be filed with the clerk of the committee no later than 4:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday; that the motion be distributed to members in both official languages by the clerk on the same day the said notice was transmitted if it was received no later than the deadline hour; and that notices received after the deadline hour or on non-business days be deemed to have been received during the next business day and that when the committee is travelling on official business, no substantive motions be moved.

• (1610)

The Chair: Is there any debate on this motion?

Mr. James Bezan: I have a quick question. Is that the identical routine motion that we had in the last session?

The Chair: Yes, I believe it is. None of these were changed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

Next is motion 11.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This is "Orders of Reference from the House Respecting Bills":

That, in relation to Orders of Reference from the House respecting Bills, (a) the clerk of the committee shall, upon the committee receiving such an Order of Reference, write to each member who is not a member of a caucus represented on the committee to invite those members to file with the clerk of the committee, in both official languages, any amendments to the Bill, which is the subject of the said Order, which they would suggest that the committee consider; (b) suggested amendments filed, pursuant to paragraph (a), at least 48 hours prior to the start of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill to which the amendments relate shall be deemed to be proposed during the said consideration, provided that the committee may, by motion, vary this deadline in respect of a given Bill; and (c) during the clause-by-clause consideration of a Bill, the chair shall allow a member who filed suggested amendments, pursuant to paragraph (a), an opportunity to make brief representations in support of them.

The Chair: Is there any debate on this motion?

Madame Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Does this include independents, or do they have to be a member of a recognized official party?

The Chair: Mr. Clerk.

The Clerk: This would cover independents as well. The intent of the motion is that we don't clog up report stage with amendments that could have been moved in committee. That would include independents.

The Chair: Is there any further debate on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Now we have motion 12.

Mr. Yvan Baker: This is under “Televised or webcast meetings”:

That when a minister, the Chief of Defence Staff, or any other officer of Parliament and/or ombudsman appear before the committee, that any public meetings be televised, or if not possible, webcast.

The Chair: Is there any debate on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: All right, that sees us through the routine motions. Thank you for your co-operation in making that as straightforward as possible.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think that we probably want to start organizing our work. I believe there are a number of things we can do quickly, as well as some things that we want to take on that are more substantive.

I have circulated a notice of three motions. I'd like to start with motion number three, which is as follows:

That the Committee invite the Minister of National Defence to appear regarding the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2021, no later than November 4th, 2020, for no fewer than two hours, and that the meeting be televised.

For reference, the main estimates were tabled some time ago, back in March, I believe. Without having a budget to look at, I think it's important that we get the minister here and talk about the main estimates, also considering that we haven't met since March.

The Chair: Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I want to suggest.... In the last sitting, one of the things we did well, in a spirit of collaboration.... I thought those of us who were members of the subcommittee worked well together to help prioritize and shape the agenda for the committee's work.

Would it make sense to have the subcommittee meet to do that again and incorporate all the suggestions from all the various members? I'm sure most of us here have ideas about the kind of work we would want the committee to do. Then those of us on the subcommittee can go through that work and come to a resolution that allows all of our interests to be accommodated.

• (1615)

The Chair: Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Thanks very much, Madam Chair.

While I generally support the suggestion that we send everything to the steering committee, before we adjourned for COVID we had agreed to invite the ambassador for women, peace and security to the committee. Also, Mr. Bezan has a motion, which I think there is

broad support for, about examining the impact of COVID on the Canadian Forces.

My suggestion, so we can get started expeditiously, would be that we agree to do those two things, on which I think there is broad consensus, and refer all the other motions to the subcommittee for establishing priorities.

Mr. James Bezan: I don't disagree with that, Madam Chair, but just as a point of order, we have a motion on the floor that we should debate first and then move forward.

The Chair: The motion on the floor deals with the visit for the estimates.

I don't think there's any objection to the minister coming to speak about the estimates, and if we need something in short order.... I agree with the point that we have a couple of things. If we want to send most stuff to the subcommittee for consideration, we'd have a bit of free time before they come back to us with their plan. If they're the ones who are going to prioritize and come up with an agenda, a calendar and stuff, maybe there are a couple of things that can be done in the meantime.

Is that what you're suggesting, Mr. Bezan?

Mr. James Bezan: It is. Until we have our work schedule organized, witnesses called on other motions, I think we can do some of these other ones that are fairly straightforward. Of course, the one that's most straightforward is to have the minister appear on the main estimates.

The Chair: Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I note that there is a motion on the floor, but I also note that there was broad agreement in terms of the way to proceed. What I would suggest is that, with regard to Mr. Bezan's motion and the interest of the committee on the COVID response of the CAF, we could certainly, as one of the priorities, invite officials to have them brief us.

I do note as well that Mr. Garrison—and this was supposed to be our next meeting in March—was to have Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's ambassador for women, peace and security, and, as always, the minister is very happy to appear at this committee and is making sure to look at his calendar to see what his availability is. That gives us three meetings right off the bat.

What I propose, Mr. Bezan, if you would withdraw your motion, is that the committee agree that those three would be the first meetings. Then, in the meantime, we can have a meeting of the subcommittee to prioritize whatever motions have been sent by members, as well as motions that may not have been sent yet.

Mr. James Bezan: I will not withdraw. I think that we'd pass the motions of the ones we want to work on.

I should also make a note that the main estimates have to be reported back to the House before November 24, I believe, so we have a responsibility here. It's not just about organizing our schedule. It's about being responsible parliamentarians and hearing from the minister on the spending plans for the department in the main estimates.

Let's deal with this one, and then we can move on to the other two suggestions by Randall, which I support.

The Chair: Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I should note that, despite the wishes and the desire on the part of the minister to be there whenever he can at our committee, for the last several times that we have had to vote on the main estimates, he has not made himself available until the vote was already deemed agreed upon in committee and passed without our ever having heard from him. That is my concern about taking Mr. Bezan's motion off the table at this time.

• (1620)

The Chair: I don't think there is any.... If we want to make it a priority motion and we send three priority motions to the steering committee, knowing they have to get done in the next two to three weeks, I think that is something that could respect the spirit of what people are trying to achieve here. If that's the case, I don't think that we necessarily have to have Mr. Bezan withdraw his motion. Other people may want to put their motions forward, and we'll send them all to the steering committee.

Mr. Bagnell, you are next, followed by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: I just want to get some clarification. I understand that Anita is proposing two of Mr. Garrison's motions and Mr. Bezan's motion, and that Mr. Bezan's motion would occur when the minister is available sometime in those first three meetings.

I want to clarify with Mr. Bezan. Does your motion say that the very first meeting is the only one the minister would be at?

Mr. James Bezan: No, the only clarification on ours is that it has to happen before November 4.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Sorry, on your motion....

Mr. James Bezan: That's what the motion reads. I will circulate it.

Is it possible, Madam Chair, for our clerk to put the motion on a shared screen so that anybody who doesn't have it in front of them, even if the motion has been previously circulated, can see it?

The Clerk: It's a tricky proposition. The difficulty is that it makes for bad TV, and it may not be legible to viewers at home.

The motions have been distributed previous to the meeting, so everybody should have copies of them, and they are available in the committee's binder on the Source website for all members.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Several people would like to present a motion today, myself included. I have spoken to members from various parties and I believe that an amendment to my motion

will be proposed. Since many of us have a motion to present, logically, we should introduce all of them today and then let the sub-committee set its priorities.

I do not know how my honourable colleagues feel about it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I was going to suggest a potential friendly amendment where Mr. Bezan.... We could suggest that, in the first three meetings, the chair look at having Ms. Jacqueline O'Neill, the minister on the estimates, and a briefing by officials on the COVID response of CAF, and then let all other motions stand for the steering committee.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe has suggested that all motions stand. I think that is okay too, but the concern would be if the steering committee doesn't get to meet immediately, as we do want to have something for next week.

Instead of tabling everything, Mr. Bezan, would you agree that the chair be advised to have those three as the first meetings, or would you like to proceed? I think we've all agreed on this; it's just a procedural thing now. I think we all know what we'd like to do in the beginning. I think the chair would have to check the availability of all of them, including Jacqueline O'Neill.

My suggestion would be a friendly amendment that the chair start with those three meetings and then all other motions stand until such time as the steering committee gets to meet to discuss.

• (1625)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, may I?

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: There's no such thing as a friendly amendment. I've looked for it in the latest edition of O'Brien and Bosc, as well as in the Standing Orders.

I say, let's deal with this motion. It doesn't tie the hands of our chair in organizing work beyond November 4. I think it's quite straightforward to find the time in those first three meetings during the month of October to get this to happen. Then I have no problem if we want to do more of an omnibus motion listing the three notices of the motions that we want to deal with in the first three meetings, including the ambassador for women, Jacqueline O'Neill. I think that would be acceptable.

So let's deal with this motion and move on and get the rest of the work done.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bezan.

We have a motion on the floor about having the minister come for estimates before November 4. Also, someone else brought up a point that maybe not everyone has submitted all their motions. Some people may not have come prepared to bring a motion to the floor today. Maybe we should open that up as well later on.

I think we can go ahead and vote on having the minister come for the estimates. Does anyone else want to weigh in on that?

Mr. Baker.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I wanted to weigh in on Mr. Bezan's motion in regard to the minister coming to committee on the main estimates. I note that in his motion he says it will be for no fewer than two hours.

I have a couple of points. One is that I don't know if the minister is going to be available for the full two hours on the dates we can meet, so I don't know if this is something we can secure or not. I just don't know. I'm new to federal office and how it works here, but that's the question I wanted to put out there. Maybe that's a question for the chair or for the clerk on how we deal with that.

The second thing I'll put out is that I know the minister has been very available to this committee, both when we were sitting in the spring and in the winter and also in the past. I feel that if we had to stick to one hour, I'd be comfortable with that.

The Chair: Is there anyone else?

I think at this time we can have a vote on Mr. Bezan's—

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I have a point of order.

Was Mr. Baker suggesting an amendment to Mr. Bezan's motion? No? Okay. Very good.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. We can have a vote on Mr. Bezan's motion to have the minister come for two hours to talk about the main estimates before November 4. Do I have the major parts of that correctly? Okay.

Is there any further debate on this motion?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, then Ms. Vandenberg and then Mr. Garrison.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I, too, would like to introduce a motion to the committee. You should normally have received it in the digital binder. It reads as follows:

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee undertake a study on the effects of the aging of the CF-18 fleet and the operational capacity of the Canadian Armed Forces; that, as part of this study, the Committee examine the impacts of the repeated delays in procuring new aircraft, the growing workload involved in maintaining the current aircraft and the availability of personnel to carry out these operations, among other issues; that, in so doing, the Committee assess the options for improving the operational process of replacing the CF-18, including by engaging the services of Quebec's aerospace industry; and that the Committee report its findings and recommendations to the House.

I believe that there will be an amendment and that we will all agree on it.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Is it possible to move that amendment?

The Chair: Is there debate on this motion?

Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: No, it's just a point of clarification. Is Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe moving his motion or tabling his motion right now? I think we discussed that we would table all motions, except for the first few meetings. It's just to clarify.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I am presenting this motion. That is what I had intended to do.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have a motion that has been tabled, and we just voted on Mr. Bezan's motion.

We were talking about doing some other short-term work. Do you want to agree to that now, or send that to the subcommittee as well?

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: I would send it to subcommittee to set priorities on the matters. I will, however, introduce it today.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: I'm not entirely clear. There's a motion on the floor. I was planning to put a motion that would supersede that one. Because Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe's motion is on the floor, I'm not sure if I'm in order, but I would like to propose a motion that in the first few meetings, in the first week, we hear from Jacqueline O'Neill and we have a briefing on Operation Laser, and that all other motions be sent to the subcommittee.

I don't know whether I'm in order, if Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe has his motion on the floor.

The Chair: I think he has his motion on the floor. That's my understanding. We have to deal with that motion.

Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I would like to propose an amendment to the motion, which is to have the government respond to the report, and to include Canadian companies, not just Quebec companies, to appear as witnesses.

The Chair: This is the challenge: What are we going to do in our committee, and what are we going to do in our subcommittee?

This is a decision. I know the subcommittee's job is to prioritize and come up with a calendar of work. We could spend a lot of time here on motions and amendments and actually kind of supersede the work of the subcommittee. I've also heard from others who said they weren't ready with a motion but they wanted to table some motions.

We could go ahead. We have one motion from Mr. Bezan that has been passed. What we need is two or three short little things that don't take a lot of organization and that maybe include officials, who are a little easier to get as witnesses than...for a larger study.

If we could find a way to put a motion forward for one or two other small studies or small briefings or something, and then refer everything else to the steering committee, then we'll make sure that... We could also set a deadline if you want to send in another motion for a study. We could make it so that it needs to be sent to the clerk by Friday at the end of the day, or whatever people would like to see. Then the subcommittee will have dealt with what we need to keep us.... That way we can make good use of next week while the subcommittee is putting a plan together.

Do I understand that correctly? Is that where we are?

• (1635)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mrs. Gallant.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: I believe Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe had a motion on the floor, and I had an amendment to his motion. Are we going to deal with the amendment and then the motion, or is Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe expected to pull his motion off the floor altogether?

The Chair: No, I don't think that has been said at all. I'm trying to find a way.... I'm listening to what everybody has to say and making sure that I understand what we're trying to achieve here. I am trying to make a way forward, so that everybody gets what they want.

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe: As Mrs. Gallant said, we have the motion before us. Mrs. Gallant moved an amendment with which I agree. We could then pass the motion immediately and submit it to subcommittee for prioritization. Then we could move on.

I believe that would get us out of the mess we're now in.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor from Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, and an amendment from Mrs. Gallant.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I have a point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: I'm sorry to be a bit petulant, but you have to consult the "raise hand" function. Either we use it, or we don't.

The Chair: There must be a lag, because I looked at it and there wasn't a hand up. It could be my terrible Internet.

Go ahead, Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison: My proposal is that we don't use it, because it's going to cause a problem.

At this point, I think we understand what we're trying to do here. I move to refer Mrs. Gallant's amendment and the main motion from Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe to the steering committee.

The Chair: We have a motion from Mr. Garrison to refer the amendment by Mrs. Gallant and the motion by Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe to the steering committee.

Is there any further debate?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Does anybody want to make a suggestion about more motions?

Ms. Vandenberg.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: Now I would put forward the motion that I originally mentioned, which is that we invite Jacqueline O'Neill, that we invite officials to talk about the CAF COVID response, and that we table all other motions to the subcommittee.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor from Ms. Vandenberg.

We'll go to Mr. Spengemann and then Mr. Bezan.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Madam Chair, I did not want to speak to that motion. I had a couple of additional ideas, or at least one additional motion that I would table, so I will go back in the queue and speak later on, if that's okay.

The Chair: Does anyone want to speak on Ms. Vandenberg's submission?

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would ask that we amend Ms. Vandenberg's motion so that it refers directly to Mr. Garrison's motion about inviting Jacqueline O'Neill and to my second motion that we have a meeting regarding SARS CoV-2 and its impact on the Canadian Armed Forces operations domestically and abroad.

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: That was my intent.

The Chair: That sounds good.

Is there any further debate on Ms. Vandenberg's motion?

(Motion agreed to [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Clerk: Could I just intervene for a second? I'm going to have to minute this. The motion we are adopting would be Mr. Garrison's motion with regard to inviting the ambassador for women, peace and security. We're going to consider that adopted.

The motion that Mr. Bezan had put forward was for three meetings—a very small study, I guess—on the COVID-19 impact on the Canadian Armed Forces. Was it just an initial briefing on that subject matter? Is that what we're agreeing to?

• (1640)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg: That was my understanding.

Mr. James Bezan: I would accept that as being part of the study that we're going to undertake on the second motion—that national briefing. It comes down to you, as chair, and us as the committee to organize our work, but I would still like it to refer to the second motion. That briefing would be just the first step in how...everything from Operation Laser work to withdrawing forces from international deployments.

The Chair: I think we understand now.

Mr. Clerk, are you good now?

The Clerk: Just to maintain my own sanity in trying to corral all of this, I'm going to take the other motions that have been submitted and, with the permission of the members present, I could insert them into the minutes as notices of motion. I would then refer to those notices of motion as being referred to the steering committee. Is this the understanding?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Chair, I'm good with that direction.

I know that Mr. Spengemann is bringing forward another motion, and I have one other motion on military justice to present. Do we present them here, or do you prefer that we go ahead and submit those for study at the subcommittee?

The Chair: That's a really good point, Mr. Bezan.

I wanted to give everybody who did not come with a motion ready to be tabled today a chance to bring a motion forward.

Mike, what is the time frame? What do people think is reasonable? Would it be two or three days, to have it to the clerk if it's to be included in the submission to the subcommittee? It's Wednesday, so that would be by the end of the day on Friday.

If you have any other motions that have not yet been submitted, you can submit them to the clerk by the end of day on Friday. They will then be included in this as a notice of motion to go to the steering committee.

The Clerk: Just a point of clarification, anything that comes after today won't be in the minutes as being referred to the subcommittee today. That does not curtail any other motion from being brought forward at the steering committee.

The Chair: I copy that.

Mr. Bezan.

Mr. James Bezan: I'll just give a notice of motion on this, then, and we'll circulate it to the committee: That the committee undertake a study on the military justice system in the Canadian Armed Forces, that the study be composed of no fewer than seven meetings, that the findings be reported to the House and that the government table a comprehensive response.

The Chair: Did you submit that one to the clerk already?

Mr. James Bezan: We will submit it right now.

The Chair: Okay, copy that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Spengemann, go ahead.

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that constructive direction to send motions in for consideration.

I'd like to put forward a notice of motion for a study on extremism in the Canadian Armed Forces. The motion is this: That the Committee undertake a study of no fewer than 4 meetings studying the prevalence of white supremacy, racism and discrimination within the Canadian Armed Forces, the impact on Canadian Forces recruitment, morale, operational effectiveness, and recommend actions to combat, minimize and eliminate them - in a report to be presented to the House.

Madam Chair, I will forward this motion in writing to the clerk by end of day.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Spengemann.

Are there any further questions?

Mr. Bagnell.

• (1645)

Hon. Larry Bagnell: This is just an information notice that I'll be submitting to the clerk. On the motion by Mr. Bezan on NO-RAD, we had agreed to a northern dimension of that in the last committee, so I'll be submitting exactly the same wording that we all agreed to last time.

Mr. James Bezan: Times change, Larry; times change.

The Chair: I think we have a good way forward here. I want to thank you all. There certainly was a spirit of collaboration and working together, and we have some really important work to do here. I really want to thank you all for being so considerate and for working together with your colleagues. We'll get to work next week.

Thank you very much. I hereby adjourn this meeting.

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